Gifted Males and

Females:

Shared and Distinct Challenges



Gifted Males

• Negotiating Masculinity



- Expectation to understand image of masculinity
- Gifted males face two major issues
 - Seeking ways to be masculine and
 - Developing their full potential







Boy Code

Assumptions, models, and rules of what it means to be a man







Boy Code (Pollack, 1998; Kerr & Cohn, 2001)

- The Sturdy Oak
 - Men should be strong, silent, and self-reliant.
 - Showing emotions and being kind are seen as breaking this rule.
- Give 'em Hell
 - Competitive sports, violence, "over-the-top" attitudes, risky behavior
- The Big Wheel
 - Achieve status, power, and domination
- No sissy stuff
 - Inhibits the expression of any feelings that might be construed as feminine
 - Like dependence, warmth, and empathy





Role of Athleticism

• Issues for

- Gifted boys who don't like sports
- Uncoordinated males
- Multi-talented boys
 - High levels of stress trying to please everyone









Androgyny and Bullying

- Androgyny
 - Aggressive and nurturing
 - Dominant and submissive
 - Characteristic of gifted individuals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996)
- Complex for psychologically androgynous gifted young males (Hebert, 2013)
 - Victims of bullying
 - 73% of males reported being bullied at some point between K - 8
 - (Peterson & Ray, 2006)







Identity Development

- Gifted males face more conflicts
- Expected to be constant achievers
 - Never expected to fail or just be average
- Qualities supporting identity development
 - Sensitivity
 - Multicultural appreciation
 - Inner will
 - Relationships with adults
 - Emotional support from family
 - Talent development opportunities







Underachievement



- Critical issue for gifted males
- Family dynamics
- Community values
- Peer group
- School curriculum
- Selective achievers
 - (Herbert & Schreiber, 2010)
 - Motivation and performance match only in specific areas that satisfy personal goals and interests







Underachievement Van Houtte (2009)

 "It has been shown that boys tend to achieve less than girls because they experience a culture that is far less study oriented than the culture for girls."



What about achievement in math?

- Are boys better at mathematics or do they just think they are?
- Hargreaves, Homer, & Swinnerton (2009) found no significant differences in math performance for 9- or 13year-old gifted boys and girls. However, there were significant differences in attitude: math was viewed as a "boys' subject" by participants.



Schools NOT Responding to Male Interests

- Boys view reading as a feminine activity
 - Literature teachers (mostly female) often choose girl friendly literature
- Boys enjoy literature but they like
 non-fiction, science fiction, horror,



"There is more than one way to burn a book. And the world is full of people running about with lit matches."

-Ray Bradbury







action, comedy, fantasy



Schools NOT Responding to Male Interests

- Boys need hands-on, projects, research, and experimental activities
 - This type of instruction is often neglected in schools





Best Practices for Gifted Males

- Father Son engagement
- Mentoring
- Balance athletics and extracurricular activities
- Masculine counseling approaches
- Boy-friendly teaching strategies







Engaging Gifted Boys in Writing and Reading



- Gifted boys may avoid reading and writing due to other passionate interests (Pennington, 2008).
 - Connect R & W to these outside interests!
- Issues
 - Handwriting
 - Teacher's emphasis on neatness and spelling may create barriers.
 - Too boring
 - Write a commentary about sports and read it using an "announcer's voice."
 - Write jokes and deliver them on "stage."

GTX program for Gifted Boys

- A taster of what happens on a Friday afternoon at MTBS. Boys in the GTX program choose from a range of activities designed to push learning beyond the confines of the classroom and curriculum. Activities include skateboard design, bee-keeping, journalism, shooting, illustration and rowing (to name a few!). This video has been filmed and produced by Sixth Former Alex.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44oToS347-8
- http://www.merchanttaylors.com/senior-boys/gtx.html



Calvin & Hobbes

• By Bill Watterson



Gifted Females



- Negotiating femininity
 - "When I was young, my mother told me it was more important to be smart than feminine. Being feminine meant I was weak. If I were to take care of myself in a world I couldn't trust with men I couldn't depend on, I needed to be smart, strong and independent. I assumed this was the opposite of being feminine. I wondered if I would have enjoyed being a woman more when I was younger if I didn't think it would get in the way of my success."
 - Marcia Reynolds, Psy.D. (2010)





External Barriers

• Parental Influences



- Lower parental expectations for girls particularly in math (Reis, 2002)
- Teacher Influences
 - Kramer (1985) found that teachers were usually able to identify the gifted boys, but were often surprised to learn that a girl was considered gifted.
 - Teachers have been found to believe and reinforce one of the most prevalent sex stereotypes - that males have more innate ability, while females must work harder (Reis, 2002).

Sexism in the Schools (Fox, Sadker, & Engle, 2009)

- There are more female valedictorians but these women showed a sharp decline in intellectual self-esteem and career goals as they moved through college and life.
- There was a persistent concern with these women about the difficulty of combining career and family.







Sexism in the Schools (Fox, Sadker, & Engle, 2009)

• Gender segregation - separate and almost invisible

• Girl areas and boy areas



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Curriculum (Fox, Sadker, & Engle, 2009)

- In science textbooks few female scientists are mentioned
 - A Google search of "famous scientists" produced the following list of images in the order shown (Curie was the only female in the top ten and was #10):



Classroom Interaction (Fox, Sadker, & Engle, 2009)

- Girls receive less attention and control rarely in trouble
- Girls learn to accept second class citizenship, and boys learn to accept the spotlight.



Internal Barriers (Reis, 2002)

• Personality Factors



- Personal choices / decisions (family versus career)
- Loss of belief in abilities / self-confidence
- Social problems and isolation (girls may "play dumb")
- Perfectionism



The Horner Effect (Kerr, 1994)

 or fear of success, in which girls purposely hold back because of a need to please others (rather than compete with them), a need that is more intense with gifted than average girls.



The Imposter Phenomenon (Kerr, 1994)

- ...in which girls feel pressured to explain away their success since it goes contrary to social expectations and their own selfimage. They maintain that they performed well due to luck or because people did not evaluate them properly.
- Adults need to develop strategies for helping gifted girls negotiate around this emotional mine field.



1. As parents, be coaches, not judges. Coaches encourage, have high expectations, praise, criticize, and set limits, but children accept coaching because they believe coaches are in an alliance with them and on the same team. Judging parents direct their efforts at finding misdoings and punishing appropriately. Parents who are continuously judgmental alienate their children because children feel like they are against them.



2. Emphasize intelligence, hard work, independence, sensitivity, and perseverance in your daughters. Deemphasize the importance of appearance. Relationships that are appearance-based fade as may pretty appearances. Relationships based on shared interests and values have much more potential for depth.



3. Set as high expectations for your daughters as for your sons. Expect post-high school education whether or not you attended college. The American Dream is real for women too.



Ten Tips for Parenting Gifted Girls (Rimm, 2002)

4. Teach healthy competition. Encourage the exhilaration of winning, but don't always let girls win. Winning builds confidence; losing builds character.



(Rimm, 2002)

5. Don't pressure your daughters to fit in socially. Many girls feel different during adolescence. Help them to feel comfortable with their differences and redirect their energies toward positive activities like music, drama, debate, science, sports, or religious activities.





Ten Tips for Parenting Gifted Girls (Rimm, 2002)

6. Encourage your daughters to be involved in all-girl activities like Girl Scouts, and consider all-girl classes or schools if boys cause them to lose confidence or distract from their learning.



7. Encourage your daughters to read stories about successful women. The successful women found such stories inspiring. Help girls to be comfortable with math from preschool on including counting, measuring, and scoring. Teach spatial skills through puzzles, games, and building activities.







Sheryl Sandberg

- The COO of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, has published a new book called <u>Lean In</u>. The book offers career advice for women in a world that is still dominated by men.
- Sandberg argues that women need to be more assertive in their careers, fighting against societal programming that conditions them to defer to men, scale back their ambitions, and essentially give up early. This passivity, Sandberg argues, is the real reason there are so few women in positions of power.





Ten Tips for Parenting Gifted Girls (Rimm, 2002)

8. Don't let birth order get in the way of giving each of your daughters leadership opportunities, responsibilities, and some of your time alone.



9. Consider traveling with your daughters--the whole family, mother-daughter, or father-daughter excursions. By high school, encourage independent trips with school groups. Travel provides a spirit of adventure, enrichment, family bonding, and self-confidence.





Ten Tips for Parenting Gifted Girls (Rimm, 2002)

10. Be an active role model for learning and developing your own career. However, regardless of how busy you are, preserve time to talk with and listen to your daughters daily.





The adventures of superhero girl by faith erin hicks



Summary



- Gifted girls and gifted boys have different coping mechanisms and are likely to face different problems (Silverman, 2009).
- Gifted girls hide their abilities and learn to blend in with other children. In elementary school they direct their mental energies into developing social relationships; in junior high school they are valued for their appearance and sociability rather than for their intelligence (Silverman, 2009).
- Gifted boys are easier to spot, but they are often considered "immature" and may be held back in school if they cannot socialize with children their own age with whom they have no common interests (Silverman, 2009).
 - <u>http://www.gifteddevelopment.com/What is Gifted/learned.htm</u>
- Underachieving gifted boys may be socially immature, experience more social problems, engage in antisocial behavior, and have low self-concepts (Kerr & Cohn, 2001).

Questions

 Reffel, J. A., Monetti, D. M., Byrd, S. M., & Coffey, C. A. (2014, February). *Gifted Males and Females: Shared and Distinct Challenges*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children, Savannah, GA.

- Center for Gifted Studies at Valdosta State University:
 - <u>http://www.valdosta.edu/colleges/education/psychology-and-counseling/center-for-gifted-studies/</u>

